

# RESEARCH STATEMENT

Juliane Hennecke

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I am an applied microeconomist and interdisciplinary behavioral scientist with research interests in labor and population economics. My research aims at understanding the causes and consequences of human behavior using microeconomic methods guided by (behavioral-)economic as well as psychological theory.

In my dissertation I put a special focus on economic psychology and personality psychology by analyzing the empirical relationship between personality traits and individual behavior on the labor market. All dissertation projects are devoted to the personality concept locus of control (LOC), a measure that has been attributed substantial explanatory power for economic outcomes since it depicts how much people believe in their ability to affect life outcomes and thus is a crucial determinant of subjective expectations about rewards to own efforts.

**Personality and Female Labor Force Participation** My job-market paper, titled “The Independent Women - Locus of Control and Female Labor Force Participation” is devoted to the question whether locus of control might be one of the missing pieces in the female labor force participation puzzle. While the majority of economic studies on female labor force participation relies on monetary incentives in order to explain the labor supply decision of women, the research on non-monetary and psychological factors is still relatively scarce. This paper focuses on the role of LOC for the explanation of a woman’s participation decisions. LOC is thus theoretically assumed to affect participation probabilities via differences in the relative importance and expected size of monetary and non-monetary incentives for market production. The implications of the theoretical idea are tested using German survey data from the SOEP in a reduced form approach. I find strong indication for a significant positive effect of an internal LOC on a woman’s probability to be available for market production also conditional on commonly known tradi-

tional socio-economic determinants of participation. Additionally, the relationship is found to be strongly heterogeneous with respect to determinants of underlying monetary and non-monetary incentives such as family status, existence and age of children as well as cohort and region of living. Those findings strongly support the hypothesis that internal women put a higher weight on social purpose and economic identity as non-monetary incentives for working and thus gain higher marginal utility from participation also conditional on monetary incentives.

**Personality and Regional Mobility** Closely related to my research for the job-market paper, I started my research on behavioral consequences of locus of control in my first project with the title “Locus of Control and Internal Migration” which is joint work with Marco Caliendo (University of Potsdam), Deborah Cobb-Clark (University of Sydney) and Arne Uhlenborff (CREST) and has been published as IZA Discussion Paper No. 9600 in 2015. We model regional labor market mobility by assuming that job seekers form subjective beliefs about the return to search effort that are related to their locus of control. Internal individuals are thus more likely to search across larger geographic areas and, if job-search occurs prior to migration, also expected to be more likely to be regionally mobile. The implications of our model are tested using the same German panel data from the SOEP in a reduced form approach. In the empirical analysis, we indeed find that individuals with an internal LOC not only express a greater willingness to move, but also undertake internal migration more frequently.

**The Stability of Personality Traits** Together with my colleague Malte Preuss (FU Berlin) I questioned the common assumption of stability of locus of control in a project with the title “Biased by success and failure: How unemployment shapes locus of control” which has just been published in *Labour Economics* (August 2018, Volume 53, pp. 63–74). The goal was to identify how much at risk the growing body of existing studies, which use locus of control as explanatory variable in their economic models, is with respect to exogeneity of LOC due to reverse causality. Using the SOEP, we find that a job loss due to a plant closure has no long-lasting effect on locus of control. The common assumption of its stability is thus not rejected. However, during unemployment, control perception decreases by 30 percent of one standard deviation. The effect holds true independent from unemployment duration or socio-demographic characteristics and vanishes as soon as the unemployed find a new job. We embed this findings into the psychological theory of a trait-state model of personality development. We therefore conclude that reported locus of control is temporarily affected by unemployment. Using this trait as explanatory variable can thus lead to biased estimations when this temporary deviation

in measurement is not accounted for.

**Additional Ongoing and Future Research** In line with my existing projects and due to the focus of my dissertation on the personality trait locus of control, I am currently working on a number of additional research ideas about economic consequences of locus of control. Together with Marco Caliendo (University of Potsdam), I work on an early-stage project concerning the explanatory power of locus of control for risky health behavior such as alcohol consumption. Additionally, we started investigating regional variation in locus of control and its consequences for macroeconomic outcome variables such as economic performance and migration flows (joint with Marco Caliendo) as well as the migrant-native gap with respect to locus of control and its pre- and post-migration causes as well as consequences for gaps with respect to economic outcomes (joint with Marco Caliendo and Katrin Orth) .

In addition to improving and completing the ongoing projects and, with this, my dissertation, I am planing and looking forward to extending my research to other fields of labor and population economics in general. My dissertation projects taught me a lot about the importance and advantages of interdisciplinary. So, also for my future research, I still hope to maintain my specialization to behavioral-economically as well as psychologically motivated theory behind my empirical investigations. Considering this, I am nevertheless open for new fields of research. I am interested in the question of what drives and restrains human behavior in all aspects of life. In line with earlier projects, for example, I think that a lot of further research can be done on the determinants and obstacles of e.g. (female) labor force participation and labor mobility (regional as well as occupational), to name just a few.